

**The Race**, by Charlotte Ostermann

Sun light, a starter's gun, the crack  
of dawn and she is off!  
Coiled energies of thought –  
idea, need, hope, expectation, fear,  
in ever-tightening writhing rounds  
compressed to fit maniacally  
within the scope of mind impotent  
to birth form, to realize,  
to give thought actuality –  
now waked, spring forth  
to furious action called;  
unleashed potential hungry for release, zealous  
to capture territory jeopardized by sleep.

The race is on against her self  
and all that threatens to impede  
the undammed torrent of  
pragmatic purposes, numbered designs.  
With little enough love to give  
to less substantial things than these –  
pictures she's hoarded through the night  
against the morning's emptiness –  
she pours herself with restive zeal  
into the unsuspecting day.  
The breach innocent of intent  
falls vanquished, helpless to compete.  
Humanity – the veiled needs  
that can or will not press themselves  
upon her craning consciousness –  
falls victim to her tyranny  
and dies a little more each day.

The litany of demands, of goals –  
insistent, unrelenting chant –  
into ungraceful and uncharted time  
pushes and prods and lures.  
Hurtled in heady seeming-flight  
against the boundaries of being  
she breaks the hold of place and soars,  
imagination's wings imperiled.  
Ah, Icarus! You flee too far  
from level plains, from personhood,  
and surely someone will be hurt  
as in the ensuing battle mind  
contends with fleshed reality.

At times her body must cry out  
in pain to have its voice heard.  
Oblivious to more subtle signs,  
unwillingly she stops, frustrate,  
begrudging the demands of weak  
and uncooperative flesh.  
She chafes against constraining bounds –  
the slow banality of form –

preferring imitation sleep  
where idea idolized confronts  
no other, no impediment.

At bedtime having thus all day  
so dis-remembered self,  
neglected essences for accidents,  
sped past all pain heedless and numb,  
she sleeps again, but fitfully –  
mind circling round to catch at the elusive,  
subtle-coded, hint  
that something she's forgotten lies  
beneath the shifting surface of  
her sketchy memory of the day.

As usual, the nagging sound  
of this small voice rapidly drowns  
in the upsurging, but convenient, tide  
of vain imaginings.  
Dancing before her inner eye  
are plans and virtues shining, bright –  
all but accomplished, shy of flesh.  
Perfected thus, demanding not,  
they lull her back to dreamless sleep.  
Morning's cramped coil begins to form anew  
as images seduce her unavailing mind  
into a sleep that mimics true repose.

If only she could truly rest,  
unwind the convoluted brain,  
and still the clockwork movements of  
the tortuous inner machine,  
then One who knows her better than  
she ever knew herself could win  
the race on her behalf and win  
her to Himself, a soul enfleshed.

Quickened to life within His gaze  
attendant only to the voice that calms all storms  
she'd wake, refreshed, becalmed,  
beloved, finally free,  
emptied, a mere capacity,  
bereft of the false sovereignty  
that, unruled and usurping,  
has smothered and quenched the fire of love  
with violent, uncreative flames.  
Ravished by, and relinquished to  
the sabbath rest of sabbath's Lord,  
plunged to her depths in sabbath peace,  
by His torrential grace restored,  
united, husbanded, made whole,  
slowed to a singleness of soul,  
unmirrored now, true face to Face,  
undriven, still, and so the race is won.